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An Experimental Writing and Grading Procedure for Freshman Composition

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AN EXPERIMENTAL WRITING AND GRADING PROCEDURE FOR FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

BY

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FOR FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

This thesis is approved as a creditable, independent investigation by a candidate for the degree, Master of Science, and is acceptable as meeting the thesis requirements for this degree, but without implying that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

Thesis Adviser

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problems of the English Instructor

College instructors of freshman English commonly acknowledge the existence of problems in teaching composition, many of which stem from two causes: the inadequate preparation in composition of entering freshmen, and the increasing size of college English classes. Consequently instructors are faced with the problem of teaching a maximum amount of composition to a maximum number of students without burying themselves behind a mountain of student papers.

Thus one of the first problems the instructors of freshman English have to resolve is the amount of composition they will assign. On this point, the decision to assign written work is usually based upon the amount of time the instructor can devote to reading and correcting themes, not whether the students are writing enough.

A second problem instructors face is marking and commenting on papers. Here the problem is hydra-headed: how much time can instructors reasonably spend writing corrections and comments on sets of themes without overloading themselves. Even more important, how effective are the comments and criticisms in improving student performance? Many instructors conclude that too many students are interested only in the grades they receive, not the suggestions for improvement.

A further related problem is the method used by instructors in teaching composition. Most instructors use the traditional approach,

which relies heavily upon lectures and discussions about the characteristics of good composition. However, many instructors are convinced that this deductive method, though it does influence a small minority, does not develop the desired awareness in the majority of the classes. Instructors state that too often students parrot verbatim definitions of unity or coherence or similar abstractions without ever applying the concepts to their composition. Instructors also declare that students tend to treat English as subject matter which need be retained only until the end of a course; afterward, it is forgotten.

The above problems can be summarized in one statement: the traditional method of teaching English, though it may be successful in indoctrinating a few interested students into the intricacies of composition, has limitations because it restricts the quantity of writing, places heavy demands on the instructor, and emphasizes deductive learning.

Possible Advantages of an Experimental Grading Procedure

The present study is an attempt to evaluate an approach where extra themes are assigned, each extra theme is judged and graded by six students (with each student grading six themes), and the theme grade is then based on these six evaluations, though not by averaging them. This method might have the following advantages:

1. It could allow the instructor to assign more writing without increasing the grading load. The instructor could still grade as many papers as he ordinarily would under the traditional system and yet the quantity of student writing would be increased. This additional writing would support the Conant Report recommendation: "...one half of the total

time allotted to the study of English should be devoted to English composition with each student being required to write an average of one theme a week."[1] Even though the Conant study is an evaluation of the American secondary school, many college instructors would endorse its prescription. The work of processing and handling the additional themes could easily be handled by a secretary.

2. Evaluations and grades by the student's peers might have more of a motivational effect than those received from instructors. Students would realize that their work was being judged by their supposed equals instead of by an instructor whose standards and interests too often seem remote. Possibly peer acceptance of their writing would be more gratifying, and peer rejection more of an incentive to effort than the judgment of their instructors.

3. The process of reading and assigning grades to a number of themes might lead the student to develop, inductively, sound standards of good writing--particularly when he knows his grade will be considered as important; and furthermore, when he knows that he will be graded in turn on the accuracy of his grading.

Assumptions

The following assumptions are implicit in the study:

1. That the writing of the experimental group will improve as a result of the additional writing and the grading procedure.

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[1] Joseph T. Durham, "The Conant Report: A Critique," Clearing House, XXXIV (November 1959), 181.

2. That through evaluating and grading other students' compositions, the student will inductively acquire evaluative criteria which he can critically apply to improve his own writing.

3. That the students' evaluations and grade will be meaningful.

These assumptions were tested objectively by various statistical procedures which are described in detail in Chapter III, and subjectively through questionnaires given to the students.

Design of the Study

This study attempts to evaluate a teaching approach intended to remedy some of the problems encountered in the traditional method of teaching composition, a procedure whereby additional themes are graded by students in class, in a manner described below.

Two groups, one experimental and one control, of students in English 1 and English 4, were involved in the study.[2]

Students in the experimental group each wrote four more themes than students in the control group, with each experimental theme being evaluated and graded in the experimental sections, and each student evaluating six themes. The themes, evaluations and grades were then processed by Machine Records, and afterwards returned to the students with

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[2]Three levels of English are taught in the present freshman program, but students in English 01, a high school review course, were not included because they receive no composition instruction. Students were enrolled in the three levels on the basis of their raw scores on the English Placement test, a locally developed 120 item usage examination. Students with raw scores below 45 were enrolled in English 01; with scores from 45-80, in English 1, a basic course; and with scores of 81 or higher, in English 4, an accelerated course.

summaries of the evaluations and with grades based upon theme numerical totals plotted on a distribution curve. Each student was also graded on his grading. These steps are described in detail in Chapter III.

As a last step, both the experimental and control groups wrote a final theme, the theme being the fourth extra for the experimental group. The experimental themes were again graded by students, with each theme receiving six grades. In addition three experienced members of the English staff read and graded each final theme from both groups. The grades within and between the two groups were statistically tested to determine whether or not a significant difference existed in writing proficiency which might be attributed to the extra writing, reading, evaluating, and grading. The grades were also analyzed to determine whether or not they were meaningful. These steps are described in detail in Chapter III.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature reviewed for this investigation was divided into three main areas: similar studies, grading practices, and motivation. The first area includes studies which approximate this one; the second two areas involve material which is based upon opinion or supposition, primarily because no objective method has been determined for measuring a teacher's ability to grade composition or to motivate students.

Similar Studies

The Oregon Plan

In 1955 the English Department at the University of Oregon decided to test an assumption that a composition class of thirty-six students could be effectively taught as much composition in seven or eight hours a week if the students graded the papers as a composition class of twenty-five students could in the same amount of time if the instructor graded the papers.

Charlton Laird, a visiting professor at Oregon from the University of Nevada, outlined the experimental plan. The instructor of the experimental class would meet with his class on Monday but not on Wednesday or Friday except during fifteen minute conferences with groups of three or four students. In lieu of the omitted classes, students were assigned themes which were to be handed in on Wednesday during a conference with the instructor. In return, each student received another student's theme which he was to correct and criticize. On Friday students were to arrange

meetings with three other students in the same class and exchange papers with them. Hence each theme received two grades and two critiques, which were then returned to the writers who revised them and turned them in to the instructor on Monday.

The instructor conducted a conventional class meeting on Monday. He assigned another theme and told students to correct and grade the second set of themes as before, by exchanging the papers with other students. Then during the week, while students were writing, exchanging, and grading themes, the instructor grouped the first themes into bundles of three and four and read them rapidly, making no corrections. Later, when conference groups came in, the instructor orally reviewed the papers and pointed out significant errors. During this same period the instructor recorded grades for the writers' themes and the critics' corrections; he also wrote observations about the conference and its effectiveness.

Laird concluded that the system was confusing during the first two or three meetings, but that it worked efficiently after the initial few weeks.

Laird believed advantages of the Oregon Plan to be as follows:

1. The instructor saved time in grading and marking. Laird reported that he could grade a set of themes in an hour, since most of the errors had been corrected previously by students.

2. Students learned to criticize their own and other students' writing. Laird felt that students inductively became more aware of their own faults in writing.

3. Student attitude toward composition improved. Students were

motivated by competing with other pupils.

4. Students rarely handed in late papers, since they did not want to risk losing prestige among their classmates.

5. Plagiarism became non-existent. Students were afraid to hand in something not their own for other students to read and criticize.

6. Tension was reduced between the students and the teacher when the students realized that the instructors were trying to help, not rebuke them.

7. Students had a purpose for writing well. They knew that someone other than the instructor was going to read critically what they wrote.

Laird was not completely optimistic about the system. He indicated that the plan had disadvantages, i.e., students who criticized in generalities and not specifics; and, irresponsible students who inconvenienced other members of their exchanging and conference groups. Laird wrote, though, that he felt the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. He concluded that the Oregon Plan might be utilized even more effectively when the enrollment bulge placed greater demands on English Department staffs.[3]

As a follow-up of the Oregon Plan, John C. Sherwood later reported that two variations were added to Laird's original proposal. The first modification involved bringing several sections of composition

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[3]Charlton Laird, "Freshman English During the Flood," College English, XVIII (December 1956), 131-138.

together once a week for a lecture on composition. The rest of the schedule followed by the lecture groups was the same as that followed by the section group, except that the conferences were held with four students and lasted twenty-five minutes. The second modification involved students from the lower-division honors program, whose topics were related to their course work. Otherwise, the honors groups followed the same schedule as originally proposed by Laird.

In order to measure the progress of the students in each of the three experimental groups, control groups were established. About six hundred students, close to one hundred and eighty apiece in the section plan, lecture plan, and control group, and about twenty-five in the honors plan, were involved. All groups but the honors section represented a cross section of the freshman class.

The instructors of the groups were assigned at random. Whenever possible, instructors taught both an experimental and a control group.

Because of the difficulty in obtaining objective data concerning progress in composition, a combination of methods was used to determine improvement. (1) Each group wrote a theme on the same subject at the beginning and the end of the program. (2) Each group took the Cooperative English Test, one form at the beginning, another at the end, to determine improvement in mechanics, style, and reading. (3) Different forms of a special interlinear test, to provide a measure of grammar and style, were given at the beginning and the end.

In evaluating the results of the experiment, Sherwood drew the following conclusions:

1. The methods of the experiment did work; the only faults

seemed to be the composition lectures and the students' exchanging conferences.

2. The methods produced results as good as those produced by conventional teaching methods. No great differences in improvement appeared among the three groups, with the section plan ranking first, the control group second, and the lecture plan third. Since the size of the honors group was so small, no conclusion was drawn about it.

3. No valid estimate of the amount of time saved was available, partly because the thirteen instructors involved did not work systematically. The method did make it possible to reduce the use of classrooms, and other classes were subsequently scheduled.

4. No marked reaction toward the plan was observed in the students.

5. Staff members involved, at first suspicious, later found that the plan was workable, and accepted it. However, Laird's assumption that an instructor could successfully teach thirty-six students in a section proved unacceptable.

6. Future courses could be taught by combining the conventional and experimental methods.[4]

Sackett Experiment

In 1958, after reading Laird's description of the Oregon Plan in College English, Samuel J. Sackett tried the system in two sections

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[4]John C. Sherwood, "The Oregon Experiment: A Final Report," College Composition and Communication, IX (February 1958), 5-9.

of freshman composition at Fort Hays Kansas State College. Sackett later reported that the system was unsuccessful for him for the below reasons:

1. No time was saved. It took just as long to prepare for and hold the grading conferences as it did to grade a set of themes.

2. The instructor had to be present constantly during the student conference sessions. When the instructor was not present, students cut classes or became boisterous.

3. Students did an inadequate job of grading papers. The poorer students questioned every error and criticism.

4. Twenty minutes for a conference was not enough time for discussing and grading student papers.

5. Students did not inductively learn to criticize or to write. Most of them did not make the effort.

6. Students tended to form homogeneous groups for conferences. When this happened, no one in the group motivated the students to seek improvement.

7. An objective test at the end of the quarter indicated that students did not learn as much under the Oregon Plan as students who had been taught by the traditional method.

Sackett asked students to write a criticism of the plan he used at the end of the semester. Out of the sixty-four students, only four said that they did not like the course. Eleven students wrote that they felt they should be taught more formal grammar, and four stated that they believed that they had not learned much in the course.

Sackett concluded that the system of having students grade their own work was not successful; he further concluded that teaching is an art and not a method.[5]

Maize Study

Ray C. Maize, at Purdue in 1953, conducted a study wherein 149 incoming freshmen with low scores on the ACE and other entrance examinations were randomly assigned to sections which would receive two different types of instruction in theme writing--experimental and traditional.

A control group received traditional instruction, utilizing the workbook approach. The instructor lectured about writing, assigned a total of fourteen themes, and corrected and graded the themes himself. In contrast the experimental group members received most of their instruction in a writing laboratory, with each student writing forty themes of approximately two hundred and fifty words. The instructor did not read or correct any of the themes; instead the corrections and criticisms came from the students in the writing laboratory. Thus two objectives of the study were met: (1) students increased their writing activity; (2) the instructor's grading load was not increased. The third objective of the study, discovering the special problems of the retarded students, various tests were given the students to determine what factors seemed to have influence on the students' ability to achieve success.

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[5]Samuel J. Sackett, "Report on a Trial of the Oregon Plan," College English, XXIII (October 1960), 45-46.

At both the beginning and the end of the experiment the Rinsland-Beck test of English was administered to both groups. The results of the test were statistically treated, and indicated that the experimental group, all of whom had low scores on the entrance examinations, had improved significantly more than the control group, also composed of low-level students, in all areas of English tested except vocabulary. Furthermore, the other tests administered (intelligence, aptitude, reading, and attitude) indicated that all the students were of limited ability, possessing little capacity in language use, vocabulary, and reading. The data also revealed that changes in both groups were small, even after the semester of instruction. The data did not reveal any evidence concerning student attitude and its effect on the results of the study.[6]

Dressel Study

The Dressel investigation studied the effects of writing frequency on writing proficiency at Michigan State College. Two groups, an experimental and a control, of upper-division students were used. At the beginning of the school term both groups wrote a theme under standardized conditions. These themes were later compared with final themes written by the same students.

The experimental students were enrolled in structured classes where they would be required to write more than the control students.

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[6]Ray C. Maize, "Two Methods of Teaching English to Retarded College Freshmen," Journal of Educational Psychology, XLV (January 1954), 22-28.

The mean number of hours of writing experience for the experimental group was one hundred thirty-one; the mean for the control group was four. (English courses were not considered in determining the mean).

At the end of the year both groups wrote a final theme under similar conditions. The themes were anonymously graded and evaluated by the instructors; they were then compared to the first themes to determine improvement. The conclusion reached by the investigators was that even though the experimental group wrote thirty times as much as the control group, no significant difference existed in writing proficiency between the two groups.[7]

Lokke-Wykoff Study

This study was conducted at Purdue in 1947 to investigate the effects of having students in freshman composition classes write twice as many themes as they ordinarily would.

Two experimental composition classes of twenty each wrote two themes a week during a semester. The control group, composed of students matched to the experimental group according to their placement test percentile scores in English and intelligence, wrote only one theme a week.

Conditions for the two groups (instructors, texts, assignments) were standardized as much as possible except for the additional writing

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[7]Paul Dressel, et al., "The Effect of Writing Frequency upon Essay-Type Writing Proficiency at the College Level," Journal of Educational Research, XLVI (December 1952), 285-293.

in the experimental classes. Also, less formal instruction was given the experimental group because of the extra writing.

A summary of the conclusions reached by the investigators after they compared the results in the two groups is as follows:

1. The double-writing reduced failure by 66 per cent and increased student improvement by 60 per cent.

2. About 40 per cent of the experimental students reached the limit of their achievement by the twelfth or fifteenth theme. The other 60 per cent continued to improve.

3. The experimental group compared favorably with the control group in tests on grammar, punctuation, and spelling, even though the experimental group had less formal instruction in these areas.

The investigators recommended that while they believed the additional writing to be valuable, the small sample used could not be assumed to represent a universe. Consequently, they believed that further research should be conducted.[8]

Kostich Workshop

Lila Kostich reported that a workshop process used at State Teachers College, Plattsburgh, New York, seemed to be successful in teaching composition and creative writing. The process required that students write themes which would then be coded and passed anonymously from class to class for student reading and grading. After the students

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[8]Virgil Lokke and George S. Wykoff, "Double Writing in Freshman Composition--An Experiment," School and Society, LXVIII (December 18, 1948), 37-39.

in the various classes had assigned grades to the papers, the instructor graded the same papers. Student grades were then checked against the instructor grades for accuracy.

Following the instructor grading, the student themes were returned to the graders so that they could see what errors they had made in evaluating. Kostich stated that this step was useful in aiding students in developing their own standards.

Finally the themes were returned to the authors, who then rewrote them according to the student and the instructor comments and grades. The themes were then turned in again for a final appraisal by the instructor.

Kostich observed two faults in the process: first, superior students tended to be generous and give higher grades; and second, poor students did not understand or appreciate the maturity of the superior students' comments and grades. Kostich proposed that such problems could be overcome by distributing themes at random: poor students would grade both superior and inferior papers; superior students would do the same.

Kostich stated that the process outlined above, while it did involve some extra reading, aided in setting uniform standards of writing for both the good and poor student. She believed that students were motivated more strongly when they knew their work was going to be read by other students.[9]

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[9]Lila Kostich, "Undergraduate Workshops in Creative Writing," College English, XIII (March 1952), 334-336.

Alford System

Harold Alford suggested using a student theme grading system whereby four themes, some good and some bad, were selected from each of the seven or eight theme assignments each term and placed in the library on reserve. The classes which had written the themes were then divided so that one half the students could write criticisms on papers one and two and the other half on papers three and four. Thus each student wrote a theme and two criticisms for each assignment, and each theme on reserve received criticisms from half the students. The writers whose themes appeared in the library then read the criticisms and in turn wrote a critical reply.

On the day the themes and criticisms were turned in to the instructor, the students discussed the four themes that had been on reserve. There was no anonymity; each student was responsible for his criticism as well as his theme, and he had to justify both when questioned.

Although he never checked the writing improvement of his classes against that of other classes, Alford claimed the following advantages for his system:

1. Students showed improvement in writing, perhaps because of the threefold purpose of the system: additional writing, criticism, and justification of the criticism.

2. Students were better critics than teachers, for students knew what the problems of composition were from experience. Students also felt responsible to exert some effort in constructive criticism because of the competition factor.

3. Student papers were better material for criticism than models from textbooks because students knew that the errors they criticized were unintentional. Moreover, through finding such errors, students developed an awareness of style, thought, and mechanics, and they realized that they should eliminate such mistakes from their own writing.

4. Students showed more enthusiasm in writing, possibly because they knew their work was going to be considered as something more than an assignment which was to be graded, corrected, and forgotten.[10]

Grading Practices

It is commonly assumed that instructor grades are valid judgments of the worth of student composition. However, in 1958, the following statement, one of the thirty-five basic issues in the teaching of English, was submitted by four organizations interested in the improvement of language.

COULD NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR STUDENT WRITING AT THE VARIOUS LEVELS BE ESTABLISHED, AND WHAT WOULD BE THEIR VALUE?

> The evaluation of student writing is difficult, Some overworked teachers mark only mechanical and grammatical errors, leaving the student with the impression that learning to write well is a negative matter--the avoidance of such errors. Others go too far in the other direction and grade very subjectively, leaving the student with the impression that the art of writing well is merely the knack

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[10]Harold Alford, "Qui Scribit, Bis Legit," Graduate Student of English, III (Summer, 1960), 15-18.

> of appealing to the tastes and whims of his particular teacher. Can norms or standards for the various levels be established--standards which are fairly objective but not merely mechanical? Would such norms exert an influence toward imitation and mediocrity? Would such standards be helpful to the teacher? To the student? Would they help solve problems of teaching or simply apply another type of pressure?[11]

It would be presumptuous to try to answer the above questions. Furthermore, investigations indicate that wide differences do exist in grading practices, revealing that possibly the present grading systems used in college composition courses can be improved.

Thompson Study

This study was conducted at the University of Chicago by Wayne Thompson in 1951-1952 to determine the extent of the variability of grading practices of thirty-one instructors in a multiple-section English course. The specific purposes of the study were: (1) to determine which instructors varied significantly in the liberality with which they assigned grades; (2) to determine which instructors varied significantly in the extent to which they distributed grades over a five-letter scale of A through F.

The method used involved tabulating the grades for each of three classes of freshman Rhetoric 100, 101, and 102. The grades were then converted into numbers, A equal to 5, B equal to 4, and so on. Standard statistical processes were used in determining the group criterion and

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[11]American Studies Association, College English Association, Modern Language Association, and National Council of Teachers of English, The Basic Issues in the Teaching of English, Supplement, College English XXI (October 1959), 9.

the individual instructor deviations.

One of the assumptions of the study was that the grading practices of all the instructors would serve as a suitable criterion for judging the practices of the individual instructors. Consequently, the analyzed data revealed that twenty-one of the thirty-one instructors involved deviated significantly in the liberality with which they assigned grades. The results also showed that thirteen of the instructors varied significantly in the distribution of grades over the five-letter scale.

The conclusions drawn from the investigation were that:

1. Significant differences in grading practices did exist in a multiple-section English course.

2. Estimating a student's progress upon the assumption that a letter grade has a fixed value equal in all sections is a false practice.

Thompson wrote that future research in the area of grading practices is necessary and worthwhile, and he indicated that such research would be undertaken at Chicago.[12]

Scales Study

Scales reported that during the Spring quarter of 1955-1956, the faculty of Fort Valley State College set out to examine its grading practices. The study was motivated by two questions: which instructors varied significantly in the generosity with which they assigned letter

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[12]Wayne N. Thompson, "A Study of the Grading Practices of Thirty-one Instructors in Freshman English," Journal of Educational Research, XLIX (September 1955), 65-69.

grades, and which instructors varied significantly in the extent to which they distributed grades over the five-letter scale of A through F?

To answer the two questions, the grade reports of the Fall quarter freshman English course were used. The grades given 391 students enrolled in the multiple-section course were assigned by eight instructors, each of whom was free to define a grade as he pleased. The letter grades were then converted into numerical grades--A equal to 4, B to 3, and so on. The numerical data was tested statistically to determine both the group and the individual instructor grading distributions.

The results of the study revealed that there were significant variations in the grading practices of the eight instructors. Three instructors (37.5 per cent) graded significantly higher than the others. Six instructors graded with a standard deviation significantly smaller than the group criterion, indicating that their grades tended to have a small range. Moreover, significant variations were found in the small range of letter grades over the five-letter scale.

Conclusions drawn from the study were that grading practices should be discussed by the staff in an attempt to unify standards. Scales wrote that a future study was being planned: instructors would be told that there was a significant difference in grading practices, and their subsequent grading practices would then be studied to determine whether knowledge of the difference caused any change.[13]

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[13]Elridge E. Scales, "Variability of Grading Practices among Instructors of a Multiple-section English Course," College and University, XXXIII (Spring, 1958), 334-336.

McKean Experiment

Keith McKean conducted an informal experiment to investigate the differences in grading practices among fourteen English instructors. He selected what he considered to be a failing theme, one which contained both mechanical and content errors. He passed the theme around for grading and asked each instructor to justify his grade.

McKean classified the instructors into three groups on the basis of their justifications: those who did not fail students, those who based the grade on things other than the actual paper, and those who graded on theme form and content. McKean also discussed the theme with the groups. He found that the first group believed that students should be given some credit for attending class and attempting to write, even when the attempt was not good. McKean found that the second group assigned grades for the following reasons: (1) the student would have to face one of the instructors in a conference, thus making the instructor feel uncomfortable; (2) one of the instructors was sympathetic because he thought the paper had been written by a veteran; (3) four instructors who failed the paper at first because it was written in pencil later passed it when it was typed; (4) two instructors said that they would fail the paper without reading it because it was short. When told that length was not to be considered, only mechanics and content, they passed the theme; (5) other instructors stated that they would pass the theme because they did not want to discourage the student.

The third group, the form-content one, assigned grades on the basis of spelling and grammar, divorced from content.

After collecting the grades from the instructors, McKean gave the same theme to eight non-teachers to read and grade. All eight said that they would fail the paper because it did not say anything, and what it did say was poorly written.

McKean concluded that while his experiment was not scientific it did indicate that instructors of English vary in grading practices, sometimes on points which are irrelevant. He suggested that the basic criterion for the grading of student composition be clear, meaningful writing that says something worth saying in standard English.[14]

Motivation

Because motivation--encouraging students to do their best work--is such an intangible, no definitive approach could be taken in reviewing literature concerning such encouragement other than referring to those ideas and opinions which seemed relevant to this study.

Magalaner indicated that one possible means of motivating students in composition is accomplished by having students read other students' themes. He wrote that students might feel a sense of accomplishment when commended, and a sense of rejection when criticized. He believed that giving students an audience would increase competition; consequently, students would want to write better.[15]

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[14]Keith McKean, "If the Shoe Fits," College English, VIII (February 1947), 255-261.

[15]Marvin Magalaner, "Give Them an Audience," College English, IX (November 1947), 104.

Davies echoed Magalaner's attitude; she said that students should write something which could be read and criticized by others. She felt that students would spend more time developing, writing, and rewriting a theme on a subject in which they were interested if they knew that others were going to read and criticize their work. She even suggested a campus literary magazine in which the best student work would be published as examples.[16]

A report of the grading workshop at a 1950 conference of college English teachers suggested that students, in workshops, read and grade themes. Members of the conference felt that student themes should be read aloud for students to criticize. Such a procedure, they believed, would make the reading and writing process more meaningful--students would recognize that their work was being judged by their equals: as a result, student writers would spend more time writing and rewriting:[17]

> ...A student who reads his theme to the class and hears their criticisms feels that he has a jury of his peers. Too, the entire class can become aware of the variety of approaches to the particular writing problem and the possibilities of different methods to use in developing it. Students who read each others themes and comment by writing a critical paper develop a more critical attitude toward their own writing as well as toward the writing of others. All evaluation by students helps to make them aware of the standards for writing.[18]

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[16]Ruth Davies, "A Defense of Freshmen." College English, XII (May 1951), 440-447.

[17]"Reading and Grading Themes," College Composition and Communication, I (May 1950), 25-28.

[18]Ibid., p. 27.

Alford described a system of student theme reading and evaluating which he claimed was quite successful in motivating students. (See Chapter II, page 17). He said of the procedure:

> ...first of all, it takes the papers out of the category of mere assignments, to be graded by the teacher, corrected, and forgotten. Students tend to be more sensitive to the censure of their peers than to that of their teachers--and their peers tend to censure them a good deal more sharply than he. Every one of my students knows, then, that each paper he turns in may turn up in the library, and if he has an ounce of self-respect, he doesn't want to be spotlighted as the horrible example; as a result, he starts the process of self-criticism by examining his work not just for what will satisfy me and earn him a passing grade but also for what will appease his classmates and preserve his status among them.[19]

Dusel, in two different articles, discussed means of motivating students. In the first article, Dusel recommended that schools determine departmental judging standards which are clear-cut and well-defined so that the below three objectives can be met:

1. The standards should measure the degree to which the students meet the purposes of English composition.

2. The standards should indicate the relative effectiveness of one pupil, or class, as compared to other pupils, or classes.

3. The standards should evaluate a student's work in terms of how the work contributes to the student's success and progress.

Dusel also stated that teachers should consider giving two distinct grades to students--one to indicate the degree of the student's immediate achievement in English, the other to indicate the

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[19]Alford, pp. 15-16.

student's progress toward the total course objectives.[20]

In the second article Dusel discussed the motivational implications of composition evaluation. He said that writing evaluation should: (1) measure the performance of every pupil against some specific standard; (2) determine the degree to which course objectives have been met; (3) answer the question of every student, "How am I doing in the course?" (4) inform the student of his success, failure, and degree of achievement. Dusel believed that meeting these four purposes in evaluation helps the student understand the objective of composition--clear, meaningful writing. He further contended that students could help determine what constituted good writing, possibly by judging their own and other students' work. He felt that such judging would make students consider errors which were criticized by their equals as being more significant than those criticized by an instructor.[21]

Veit, writing of motivation, somewhat paralleled Dusel in that he believed students, especially the under-achievers, could be successfully motivated by letting them take part in the course planning. More specifically, Veit suggested that teachers discuss course standards with students; students' suggestions should later be considered by the teacher when he graded. Veit thought that such a

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[20]William J. Dusel, "A Grade In English--What Does It Mean?" Education Digest, XXII (April 1957), 28-31.

[21]William J. Dusel, "How Should Student Writing Be Judged?" English Journal, LXVI (May 1957), 263-268.

procedure would create more interest in the formerly uninterested because they would realize that their ideas were considered important.[22]

Students, according to Brown, could be motivated if they were told in concrete terms why they were reading or writing in English classes. He believed that students need to discover the relationship between English and success in everyday life, possibly through examples which illustrated the importance of English. Brown suggested that students would understand English better if they took a more active part in discovering its function through discussion, reading, and writing.[23]

In summary, there seemed to be a high degree of unanimity among the authors of the above mentioned material about the function of the composition instructor and motivation, that agreement being that the responsibility of the teacher is not necessarily to criticize or to assign grades to composition; but rather, first, to help the student understand what constitutes good writing, and second, to help the student appraise his own work according to the standards of good writing.

A second area of agreement among the various authors seemed to

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[22]Charles Veit, "How Can We Better Motivate the Underachiever and the Indifferent Student?" Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, LXIV (April 1960), 177-178.

[23]Hamilton W. Brown, "Do Students Dislike English?" Clearing House, XXXIV (April 1960), 489-490.

be that students would be better motivated if they could take a more active part in determining the standards by which they were to be judged in composition.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE OF THE STUDY

A pilot study for this investigation was conducted during the Winter quarter of 1960 to determine an effective method for handling and processing experimental themes. The steps of the study itself, starting in September, 1960, were as follows:

Preliminary Planning

1. A control group and an experimental group were established, each containing two sections of English 1 and one of English 4, such a division closely approximating a cross-section of freshman composition students. The three instructors involved, one of whom conducted this study, each taught one control and one experimental section, thus minimizing the variation in instruction that the pairs of sections received. However, the control sections devoted more time to traditional work and material.

2. Individual students in the experimental group were matched to within three points of students in the control group, according to their scores on the 1960 fall quarter English placement examination, the matching being controlled so that the mean scores of the two groups were the same. This matching was cross-checked by the students' verbal scores on the SCAT entrance test. Such close matching made it impossible to equate every student in the experimental group with a student in the control group; of the seventy experimental students and the sixty-six control, only forty-eight pairs were matched.

None of the students knew that they were being used in an investigation.

3. The instructors involved in the study conferred early in the quarter to determine theme topics and theme assignment dates for all the experimental sections. (See Appendix II). They decided to have two of the themes written out of class in order to avoid using too much class time for the experiment.

Writing, Evaluating, and Tabulating

4. The first experimental theme assignment, an out-of-class one, was made at the class meeting before the theme was due. Students were given a numbered theme form which had a correspondingly numbered endorsement sheet, on which the student entered his name, class, section, and date. Students were given four topics, told to select one and write about it, and hand the theme in the next class meeting.

5. After the experimental themes were turned in, the endorsement sheets were removed so that themes would be annonymous. The complete set of experimental themes, accompanied by standard grading forms and instruction sheets for students, were then given to one instructor for grading by his class. This instructor passed out the grading instructions and the grading forms, marked with a number which became the student's permanent identifying number as a grader. The instructor read the instruction sheet and explained that the students would be checked to determine how well the grading they would do conformed to the consensus. Each student then received a theme, and wrote his permanent grading number on one of the six blank spaces at the top; he next wrote the theme number on one of the six blank

spaces on the grading form. In this manner, the grading process was kept anonymous.

After reading the theme, the student indicated his evaluation of it by circling a number on a five-point scale opposite each of the following criteria: Interest, Clarity, Economy, Organization, Restriction of topic, Development, Sentence variety, and Grammar, punctuation, and usage. (See Appendix II). A low number (1 or 2) indicated that the grader thought the theme weak in that characteristic. A high number (4 or 5) indicated strength. The number three was considered average.

Following the evaluation of the eight criteria, the student assigned an A, B, C, D, or F grade to the theme on the grading form, using a plus or minus if he desired. He then returned the theme to the instructor, received another theme, read, evaluated, and graded it in the same way on the same form. The grading form was turned in when the student completed grading six themes. If some students were absent, others who finished grading early were given another grading form and asked to grade one or two more papers. This evaluating and grading process took approximately twenty minutes of class time.

After class, the instructor passed the themes on to the instructor who had the next experimental section, and the process was repeated. In this manner all the experimental themes were graded in all three experimental sections a total of six times, and each student graded six themes.

6. The grading forms from all three experimental sections were collected, and the theme grades coded numerically according to

a fourteen-point scale--from A (equal to one point) to F (equal to fourteen). The forms were then given to Machine Records where the data was punched on IBM cards and tabulated on an IBM sheet, which listed each theme by number, the numerical totals for the theme's criteria, and the numerical total of coded grades. The numerical totals which represented grades were later plotted on a distribution curve, and letter grades were determined for the themes.

During the time the grading forms were being processed, the endorsement sheets were re-attached to the themes. After the printed IBM sheet was available, the numerical evaluations were recorded and grades written on the endorsement page. The themes were then ready to be returned to the students.

7. On all but the first theme, the grading forms were also graded, to indicate to each student how far he deviated from the final marks of the themes he graded. The deviation from the average grade was calculated by utilizing the same fourteen-point scale used in step 6, each step between grades representing one point. The difference between the student grade and the final grade for themes was figured by first recording the final grade for a theme on the grading form on which the theme's number appeared, and then determining how many deviation points there were for each theme. The total deviation points for each grading form were afterward plotted on a distribution curve, and grading grades were determined and assigned.

8. The students' themes and grading forms were returned to them with instructions to observe three particular items: the final grade on their theme, the numerical evaluation of criteria, and the

grading grade. Instructors explained the significance of the three items to each section, indicating that the first two were based upon six other students' opinions of their writing. The instructors also pointed out that the third item indicated the individual student's grading standards in relation to the standards of the total experimental group. Students were not told that the grades they received would not be considered as part of the course grade, since the objective was to make students more critical of their own and other students' writing.

Comparison and Analysis

9. Steps 4 through 8 were the same for the writing and processing of all four experimental themes, except that two of the themes were written in class. However, to test the assumptions listed in Chapter I, five more steps were necessary.

At the same time the experimental sections wrote their fourth theme, the control sections wrote a theme under the same conditions. Following the completion of the tabulating and grading process, the experimental themes were shuffled together with the themes of the forty-eight control group students who had been matched with experimental students. The endorsement sheets were removed, leaving only the printed number on a theme as identification; and the themes, 118 of them, separated into bundles of ten, were given to experienced members of the English Department for reading and grading.

10. Only instructors whose classes were not involved in the experiment graded the shuffled themes. Each instructor was given a

instructor. The final writing grades for the matched pairs were converted to grade points, and the mean grade point for each group determined. The null hypothesis, that there would not be a significant difference in the mean grade point of the instructor-assigned final writing grades between the two groups, was assumed. The two means were then tested for significance.

12. To test the second assumption, that through evaluating and grading other students' composition, the student would inductively acquire evaluative criteria which he could critically apply to improve his own writing, the experimental students were given a questionnaire at the end of the quarter. Students annonymously rated the various phases of the experimental procedure: the additional writing, the reading, the evaluating, the grading, the grading of grading, the mechanics of handling themes, and the combined value of the total procedure. Students could also write open-ended comments about the procedure if they desired.

The ratings for each phase were tallied, and the results charted on a frequency table. The comments of the students, when similar and when occurring more than ten times, were also charted on a frequency table.

13. The third assumption, that the students' evaluations and grades would be meaningful, was tested by first correlating the averaged student-derived grade for the fourth experimental theme with the instructor-determined grade for the same. The student and the instructor-averaged grades were converted to grade points, and the Pearson product-moment method of correlation was applied.

To indicate even more exactly how closely the student-derived grades would approximate the instructor-determined grades, the grades of the four experimental themes of each student were averaged, in grade points, and correlated with the final instructor-given quarter writing grade, which was based on the regularly assigned writing, independent of the experimental themes.

To show further the differences that existed between the student-derived grades and the instructor-determined grades, the distributions of grades were compared graphically for the final experimental themes. Furthermore, the grade distribution for the themes of comparison written by the control group were compared graphically to those of the experimental group to illustrate the difference in the two distributions.

In addition, the numerical range of the student-derived grades was plotted graphically to illustrate the amount of spread among the four student-graded themes.

Finally, the grading deviations, based on the 14 point scale, of the experimental students foreach of the four experimental themes, were graphed to show that students' grades did not deviate from the norm as much on the final themes as they did on the first themes.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In this research, the matched experimental and control groups were considered equal in ability at the beginning of the study. Table I indicates how closely the two groups approximated each other on the English Placement test and the verbal section of the SCAT examination.

To test the assumption that there would be a difference between the writing of the experimental group and the matched control group, both groups wrote a theme under similar conditions near the end of the quarter. Following the experimental group evaluation and grading of the experimental themes, both sets of themes, the experimental and the control, were given to experienced members of the English Department

TABLE I. MEAN RAW SCORES OF THE MATCHED EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS ON THE ENGLISH PLACEMENT TEST AND THE VERBAL SECTION OF THE SCAT EXAMINATION, SEPTEMBER, 1960

		English placement	SCAT "V" examination
Experimental group			
English 4	(N-18)	93.00	46.78
English 1	(N-30)	63.63	40.53
Total group	(N-48)	74.65	42.86
Control group			
English 4	(N-18)	92.83	47.11
English 1	(N-30)	63.60	40.80
Total group	(N-48)	74.65	43.17

for grading. Each theme was read three times by three different instructors; the letter grades assigned each theme were then converted to grade points, and a mean instructor grade point assigned each theme. Table II indicates the results obtained when the mean instructor grade point was calculated for both the experimental and the control group.

TABLE II. MEAN GRADE POINT FOR THE MATCHED EXPERIMENTAL AND THE MATCHED CONTROL GROUP INSTRUCTOR-GRADED THEMES FOR COMPARISON

		Instructor-derived mean	Standard deviation
Experimental group			
English 4	(N-18)	1.98	
English 1	(N-30)	1.60	
Total group	(N-48)	1.74	.67
Control group			
English 4	(N-18)	1.82	
English 1	(N-30)	1.51	
Total group	(N-48)	1.63	.71

The null hypothesis, that there would be no significant difference between the mean instructor-derived grade points of the two groups, was assumed, and the z-test was applied. The resulting z-score of 2.446 indicated that the difference between the experimental group mean and the matched control group mean would be due to some factor other than chance 98.4 times in a 100. Thus the difference was significant beyond the five per cent level, so the null hypothesis was rejected.

A further step taken in analyzing the difference in writing between the two groups was based upon a comparison of the final writing grades received by both the experimental and control groups, this final grade being independent of the experimental work. The instructor-assigned writing grades given at the end of the quarter were converted to grade points, and the mean grade point for the two matched groups calculated. Table III shows the mean scores of the matched groups' final writing grade in grade points.

TABLE III. MEAN GRADE POINTS FOR THE MATCHED EXPERIMENTAL AND MATCHED CONTROL GROUPS BASED UPON THE INSTRUCTOR-ASSIGNED FINAL WRITING GRADE.

		Instructor-assigned final grades--mean	Standard deviation
Experimental group			
English 4	(N-18)	2.83	
English 1	(N-30)	1.60	
Total group	(N-48)	2.10	.85
Control group			
English 4	(N-18)	2.89	
English 1	(N-30)	1.52	
Total group	(N-48)	2.03	1.00

The null hypothesis, that there would be no significant difference between the mean scores of the final writing grades of both matched groups, was assumed, and the z-test applied to the data. The resulting z-score of 1.10 indicated that any difference between the two

TABLE IV. SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS OBTAINED FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES GIVEN TO THE EXPERIMENTAL STUDENTS AT THE END OF THE FALL QUARTER, 1960

	Very much helpful	Very helpful	Helpful	Not always helpful	Never helpful
1. Writing extra themes was:	16	27	14	7	2
2. The theme reading process was:	19	38	3	3	4
3. Evaluating criteria on themes was:	3	19	21	16	7
4. Assigning grades to themes was:	9	26	24	6	2
5. Being assigned grades for grading was:	4	16	33	9	5
6. The shifting of papers was:	3	14	17	21	8
7. The total writing and grading process was:	13	19	27	3	2

groups could occur by chance 27 times in a 100, so the null hypothesis was accepted.

The second assumption of the study, that the experimental group, through writing additional themes, evaluating and grading other students' themes, would inductively acquire evaluative criteria which they could apply to their own writing, was not treated statistically but rather through a questionnaire. Table IV summarizes the results of the questionnaire.

In addition to answering the questions, some students wrote comments about the experimental process. These comments, paraphrased, appear in Table V.

The third assumption of the study, that the student-derived grades would be meaningful, was tested by (1) correlating the student-derived grades, expressed in mean grade-points, for the fourth set of experimental themes with the instructor-determined grades, also expressed in means for the same; (2) averaging the grades, in grade points, for each student's four experimental themes, and then correlating each student's mean for the experimental themes with his instructor-assigned quarter writing grade.

The degree of correlation between the student-derived means and the instructor-determined means for the final theme was a positive .625, indicating a high degree of agreement between the grades students determine and the averaged grade of three instructors.

The degree of correlation between the students' mean experimental theme grades and their final quarter writing grades was a positive .627, indicating that the overall average of grades for

TABLE V. SUMMARY OF STUDENT COMMENTS WHICH APPEARED OVER TEN TIMES ON THE QUESTIONNAIRES GIVEN THE EXPERIMENTAL STUDENTS.

Comments	Frequency
I did not like the topics all the time.	12
Some students make mistakes in correcting.	12
Students need to improve their handwriting.	13
Reading other students' papers gave me new ideas.	15
Circling numbers (for criteria) did not help.	17
Instructors should go over the papers with us.	19
The extra writing was worthwhile.	21

writing which the students helped determine very closely approximated the grades which the instructor gave for writing at the end of the quarter.

Further analysis of the student and the instructor grading process is represented in Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. In Figure 1, notice that the instructor-determined grades for the matched experimental group did not approximate a normal distribution, while in comparison, the student-derived grades did, because a normal distribution of letter grades was imposed on the curve of theme numerical totals.

Figure 2 illustrates the same basic distribution pattern as Figure 1, except that the number is larger, the entire experimental group, matched and unmatched, being included. Of special interest, however, is the large increase in the C range without any increase

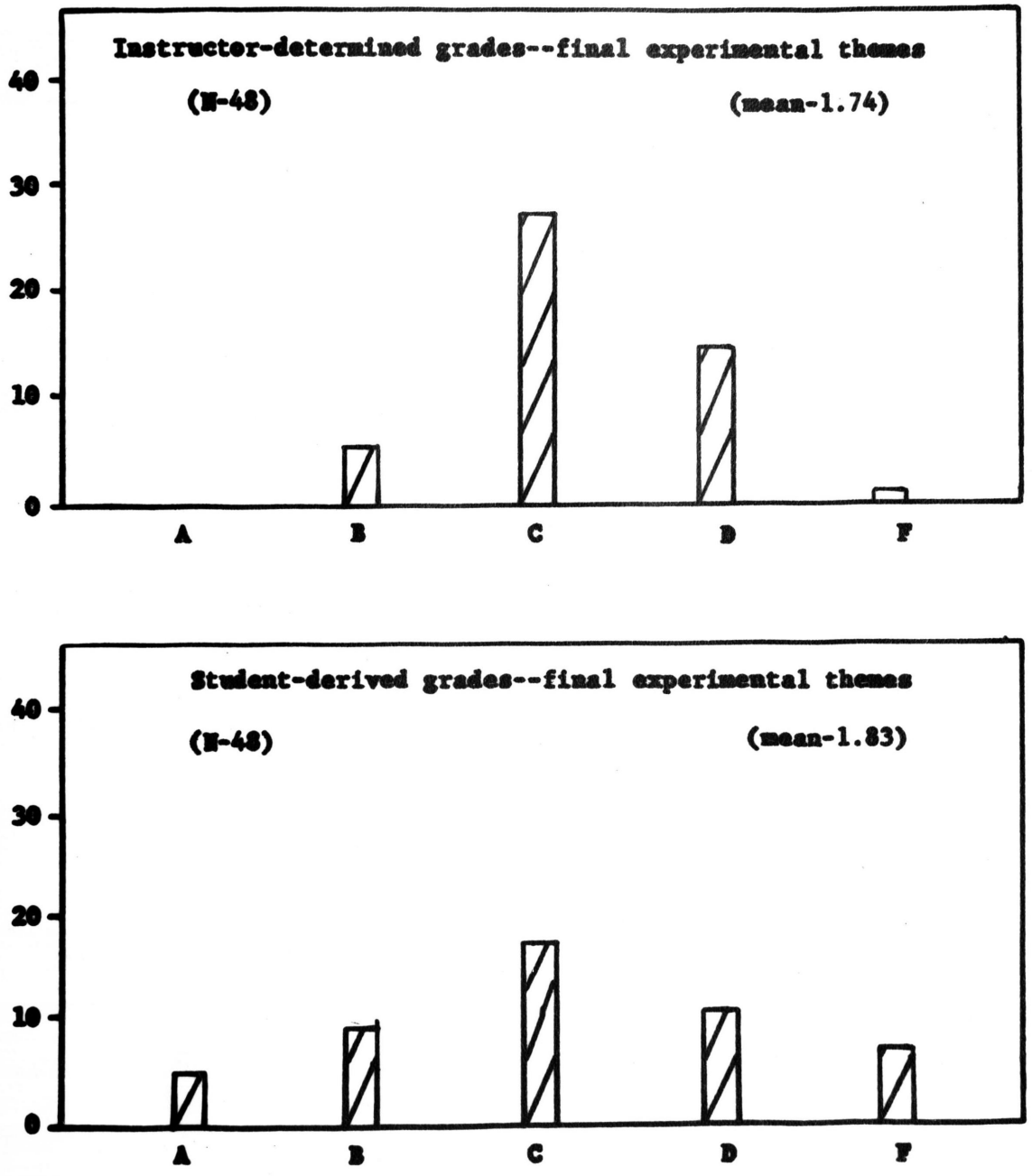
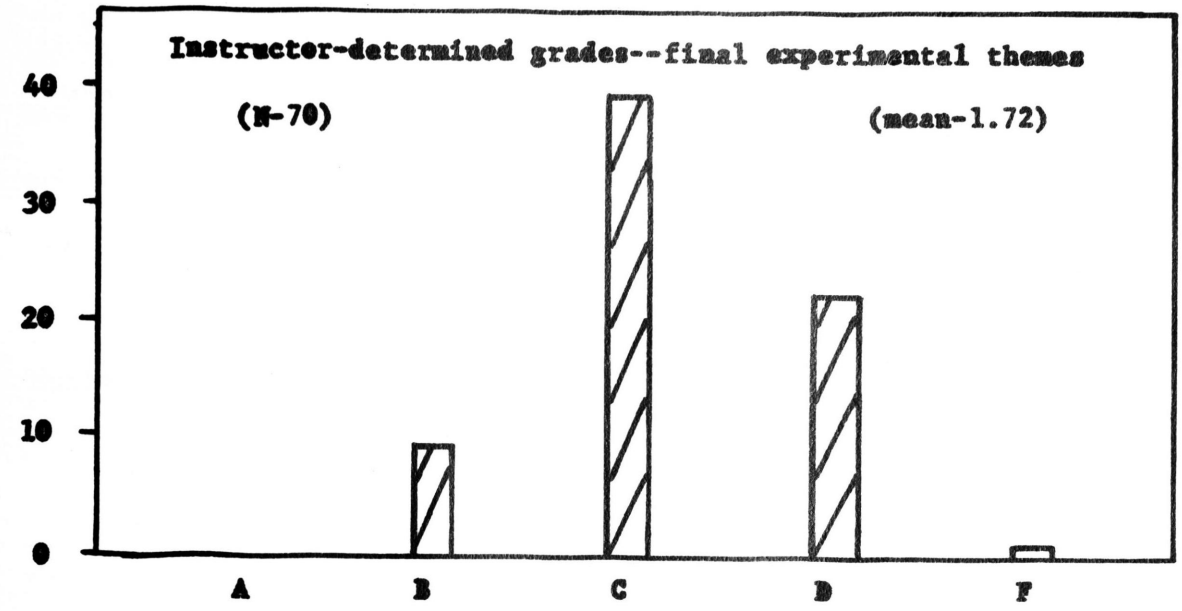


Figure 1. Comparison of the Distribution of Instructor-determined and Student-derived Grades for the Matched Experimental Group



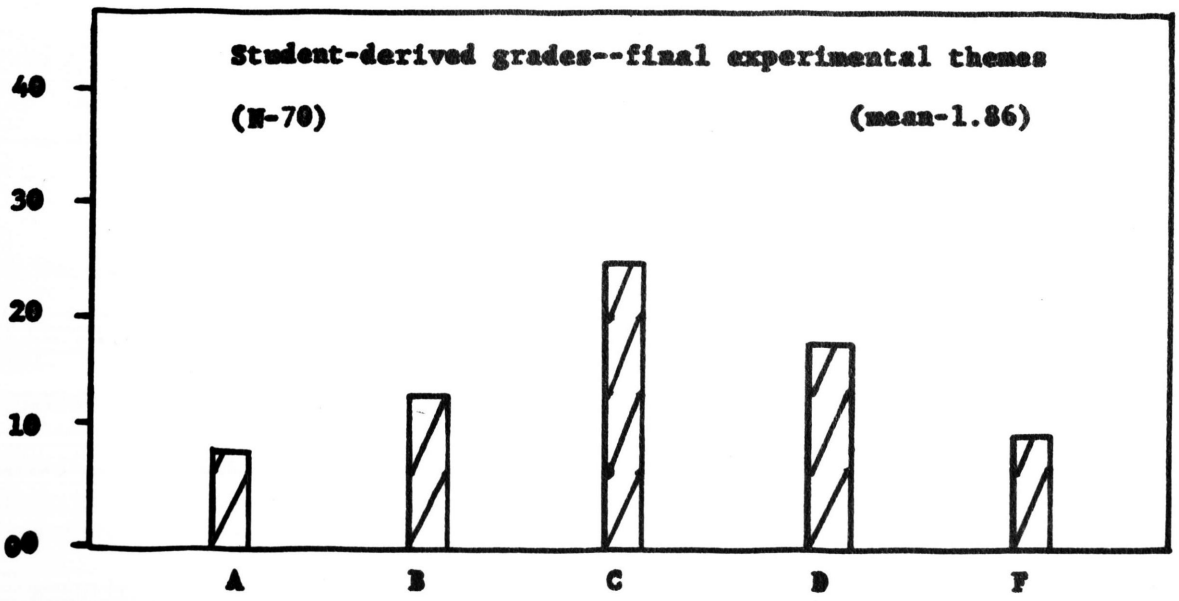


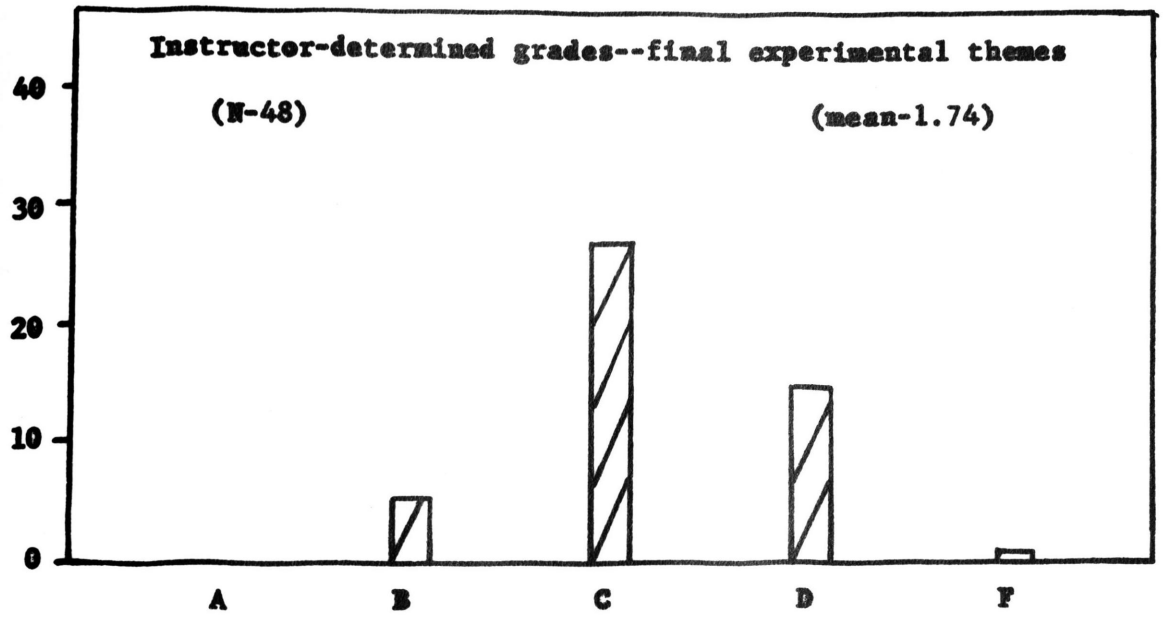
Figure 2. Comparison of the Distribution of Instructor-determined and Student-derived Grades for the Total Experimental Group

in the F range of the instructor distribution. In contrast, the student-derived grades again closely approximate a normal distribution.

Figure 3 graphically illustrates the difference in the distribution of instructor grades between the experimental group, which wrote four more themes than their matched equivalents, the control group. The mean grade of the experimental group, significantly higher than that of the control group, falls in the C range, while the mean of the control group falls in the D range.

Figure 4 indicates the range of the student-determined numerical totals for each of the four experimental theme sets. Since each theme in each set was graded six times, and the grades converted to numbers (A equal to 1, F equal to 14), the range between the lowest and the highest themes could hypothetically be from 6 to 84, or 79 points. The four bars illustrate that with each grading, the range increased; on the first themes, the range was only 37 points; on the final themes, the range was 50 points. Furthermore, the shift in range was toward the high (F) end of the scale, possibly indicating that students were becoming more critical of the papers they were reading, and consequently were giving the peers lower grades.

Figure 5 illustrates the total grading deviations of the experimental students for each of the four experimental themes. During the actual writing and grading process, the total deviation, determined by counting the total number of points each student grade deviated from the final student-derived grade for the same theme (each point being the equivalent of one-third a grade), was assigned a grade and shown



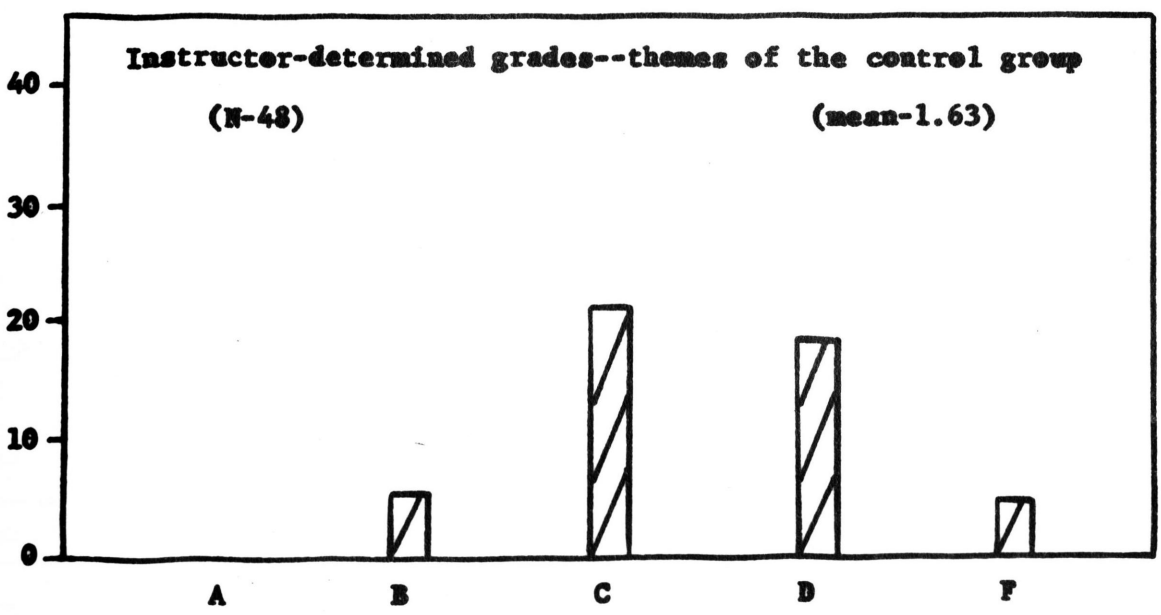


Figure 3. Comparison of Instructor-determined Grades on Themes of the Matched Experimental and Control Groups

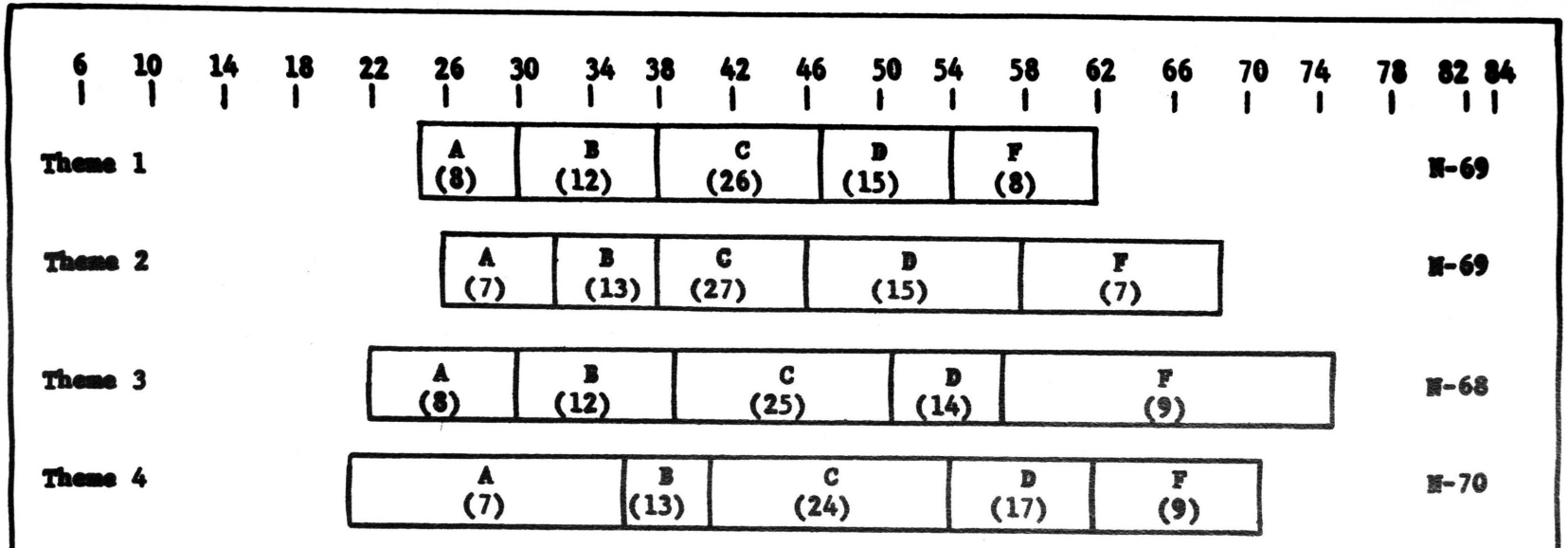


Figure 4. Range of the Student-determined Grade Totals for the Experimental Group on the Four Experimental Themes

Note: Because some students were absent on the days themes were written, the number of themes per set varied.

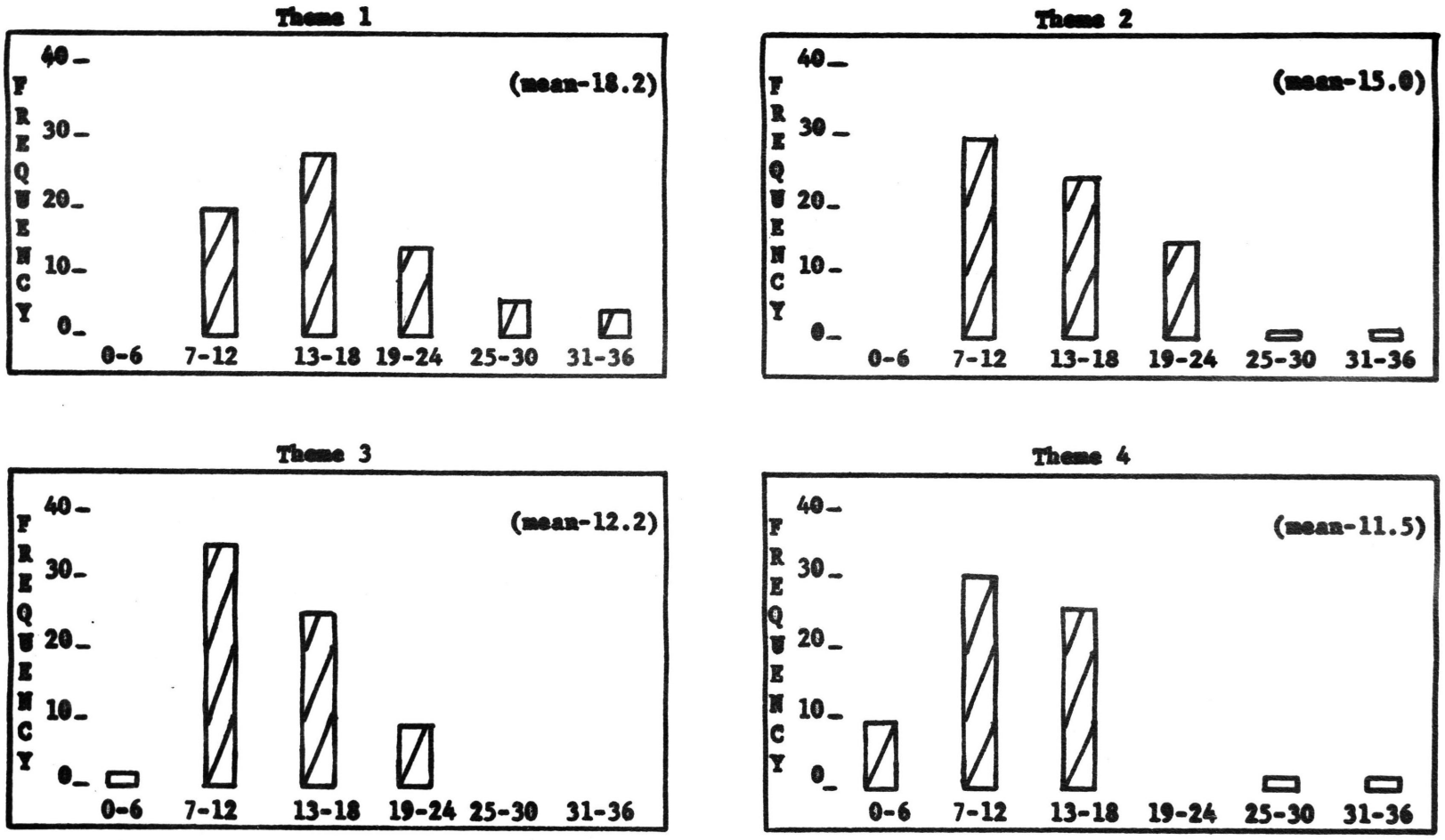


Figure 5. Distribution of the Total Deviations of the Student-graders on the Four Experimental Themes

each student, the assumption being that a student would thus be motivated to grade more accurately.

The four graphs in Figure 5 show that the deviations decreased as the students graded the second, third, and fourth times. This decrease could possibly indicate that a student became more critical each time he graded; as a result, his standards for grading became more rigid, and he, without knowledge of what other graders assigned a theme, more closely approximated the consensus.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

This study, an attempt to evaluate an experimental process wherein students wrote additional themes, and read and graded other students' themes, resulted in the following conclusions:

1. The matched experimental group had a higher grade point average on theme writing than the matched control group. Since at the beginning of the study, both matched groups were considered comparable in ability on the basis of their respective scores on the English Placement test and the verbal section of the SCAT examination, this higher writing grade point average might be attributed to the additional writing, evaluating, and grading that the students did under the experimental method.

2. Students in the experimental group believed that the total effect of the experimental process was beneficial, an attitude reflected in the student-answered questionnaires and the student-written comments. Furthermore, at various times during the quarter, some student informally remarked to their instructors that they believed the process made them more aware of the errors they were making in their own writing.

3. The grades from student graders in the experimental group approximated closely the grades that instructors assigned the same themes. The implication here would be that students, through grading, can develop standards for judging other students' composition; and those standards, however nebulous they may be at first, gradually

become more concrete and help the student arrive at a grade comparable to one an instructor would assign. A further implication might be that the same standards aid the student in determining what is unacceptable in his own writing, and as a result, the student scrutinizes his own writing more carefully.

4. The experimental process can be used successfully to increase the writing load of the student without increasing the grading load of the teacher. The additional paper work--coding, tabulating, and recording--can be handled by a secretary at a nominal cost. A secretary could code and tabulate two or three sets of student-graded themes in the same amount of time it would take an instructor to grade thoroughly one set. Thus, the experimental process might have at least two advantages: (1) the instructor could spend more time on class preparations; (2) the instructor could possibly teach larger sections.

5. Further studies, related or similar to this one, should attempt to discover the degree of relationship there is between each of the various steps used. Further studies might also attempt to discover how each of the various steps contribute to the student's progress in composition. In the event that further studies are conducted, larger samples should be used so that the data would be more precise, and measures additional to the English Placement test and the SCAT examination should be used to equate students more accurately.

6. In conclusion, the results of this study all seem to

indicate that student-evaluation of student composition, though not the ultimate in grading, can be used successfully in freshman English courses.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX I

EXPERIMENTAL THEME INSTRUCTIONS AND FORMS

GRADING INSTRUCTIONS

1. You have been given a grading sheet with spaces on it for the grading of six themes. On that sheet is your "Ranker's Number." Use this number to identify yourself.

2. The instructor will pass out themes. Take one, note the printed number on it, and write that number in one of the grading spaces labeled "Theme No." on the grading sheet. (If the theme is your own or one you have graded previously, exchange it for another.)

3. Write <u>your</u> number in one of the six blank spaces at the top of the theme.

4. Read the theme carefully. Decide what grade you would give it if you were an instructor and write that grade on the grading sheet. You may use plus (+) and minus (-) marks if you wish.

5. Indicate the theme's strong or weak points by <u>circling</u> one of the numbers opposite the appropriate words. A low number indicates exceptional weakness; a high one exceptional strength.

6. After you have finished with the theme, return it for another. Do this until you have graded a total of six themes.

KEEP THIS INSTRUCTION SHEET IN YOUR NOTEBOOK.

Ranker's Number ___ Name _____ Section ___ Date ___

Weak Strong		Weak Strong	
1 2 3 4 5	Interest	1 2 3 4 5	Interest
1 2 3 4 5	Clarity	1 2 3 4 5	Clarity
1 2 3 4 5	Economy	1 2 3 4 5	Economy
1 2 3 4 5	Organization	1 2 3 4 5	Organization
1 2 3 4 5	Restriction of topic	1 2 3 4 5	Restriction of topic
1 2 3 4 5	Development	1 2 3 4 5	Development
1 2 3 4 5	Sentence variety	1 2 3 4 5	Sentence variety
1 2 3 4 5	Grammar, usage, and punctuation	1 2 3 4 5	Grammar, usage, and punctuation
THEME NO. _____	GRADE _____	THEME NO. _____	GRADE _____

Weak Strong		Weak Strong	
1 2 3 4 5	Interest	1 2 3 4 5	Interest
1 2 3 4 5	Clarity	1 2 3 4 5	Clarity
1 2 3 4 5	Economy	1 2 3 4 5	Economy
1 2 3 4 5	Organization	1 2 3 4 5	Organization
1 2 3 4 5	Restriction of topic	1 2 3 4 5	Restriction of topic
1 2 3 4 5	Development	1 2 3 4 5	Development
1 2 3 4 5	Sentence variety	1 2 3 4 5	Sentence variety
1 2 3 4 5	Grammar, usage, and punctuation	1 2 3 4 5	Grammar, usage, and punctuation
THEME NO. _____	GRADE _____	THEME NO. _____	GRADE _____

Weak Strong		Weak Strong	
1 2 3 4 5	Interest	1 2 3 4 5	Interest
1 2 3 4 5	Clarity	1 2 3 4 5	Clarity
1 2 3 4 5	Economy	1 2 3 4 5	Economy
1 2 3 4 5	Organization	1 2 3 4 5	Organization
1 2 3 4 5	Restriction of topic	1 2 3 4 5	Restriction of topic
1 2 3 4 5	Development	1 2 3 4 5	Development
1 2 3 4 5	Sentence variety	1 2 3 4 5	Sentence variety
1 2 3 4 5	Grammar, usage, and punctuation	1 2 3 4 5	Grammar, usage, and punctuation
THEME NO. _____	GRADE _____	THEME NO. _____	GRADE _____

Name _____ Sec. ____ Date _____ Theme No. _____

Interest

Clarity

Economy

Organization

Restriction of topic

Development

Sentence variety

Grammar, usage, and punctuation

GRADE _____

Grader's No. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

_____

APPENDIX II

ASSIGNMENT SHEETS FOR EXPERIMENTAL SECTIONS

English 1 - South Dakota State College - Fall Quarter - 1960

Minimum goals of the course as set up by the English Department:

1. Read more critically than required in high school.
2. Achieve a minimum goal of 70% on reading quizzes (A quiz is a test given before discussion in class.)
3. Develop a consciousness of different ways of developing paragraphs. For this purpose, learn how to look beyond generalizations to the substance behind them. Learn to observe carefully before attempting to write on a subject. Apply to descriptive and narrative writing.
4. Achieve a minimum of 60% on a usage-proficiency test.
5. Eliminate totally errors of these kinds from writing:
   a. Total-sentence structure: CF, Run-on, Frag.
   b. Errors in spelling simple words like to, too, there, their, they're, woman, won't, men's hats.
   c. I seen him; I done the work; it don't matter.
6. Each student discover his needs so that he can set his own goals at any point above the minimums shown above.

Student's statement of his goal in the course: _____

Departmental Assignments

Sept. 19 - Monday	Introduction to course: Instructor's name ____, texts, course outline, aims, etc. Lost students go to English office (Library 108) to find out where they are registered. Introductory paragraph in class.
Sept. 21 - Wednesday	Stories. Quiz 1 followed by discussion of stories: O'Higgins, "Big Dan Reilly," p. 615; Garland, "Return of a Private," p. 451.
Sept. 23 - Friday	Handbook, pp. 292-302: Unity and coherence in the paragraph. Write paragraph 2 before class.
Sept. 26 - Monday	Handbook, pp. 303-316. Exercise, p. 315.
Sept. 28 - Wednesday	Quiz 2 and discussion: Poe, "The Purloined Letter," p. 126; Harte, "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," p. 328; Stockton, "The Lady or the Tiger?" p. 248.

*Sept. 30	- Friday	Experimental theme 1, to be handed in Monday.
Oct. 3	- Monday	Here the instructor will begin making the assignments.
*Oct. 5	- Wednesday	Quiz 3 and discussion: Twain, "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," p. 260. Student grading of experimental theme 1.
Oct. 7	- Friday	Oct. 8 - HOBO DAY - SATURDAY
Oct. 10	- Monday	
Oct. 12	- Wednesday	Quiz 4 and discussion: Parker, "Big Blonde," p. 928; Aldrich, "Marjorie Daw," p. 299.
Oct. 14	- Friday	Library lecture in class. Library exercise to be assigned and returned to lecturer after corrections have been made.
Oct. 17	- Monday	
*Oct. 19	- Wednesday	Quiz 5 and discussion: Crane, "The Open Boat," p. 580; Lardner, "The Golden Honeymoon," p. 867. Experimental theme 2 written in class.
*Oct. 21	- Friday	Student grading of experimental theme 2.
Oct. 24	- Monday	
Oct. 26	- Wednesday	Quiz 6 and discussion: Winslow, "A Cycle of Manhattan," p. 978.
Oct. 28	- Friday	
Oct. 31	- Monday evening at 7:00 - A midterm exam on grammar and/or usage.	
Nov. 2	- Wednesday	Quiz 7 and discussion: Fitzgerald, "The Rich Boy," p. 1045; Anderson, "I'm a Fool," p. 712.
Nov. 7	- Monday	
Nov. 9	- Wednesday	Quiz 8 and discussion: Steinbeck, "The Red Pony," p. 1113.
Nov. 11	- Friday	VETERAN'S DAY - Holiday
*Nov. 14	- Monday	Experimental theme 3, to be handed in Wednesday.
Nov. 16	- Wednesday	Quiz 4 and discussion: Porter, "Maria Concepcion," p. 1024; Clark, "The Portable Phonograph," p. 1268; Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily," p. 1081.
*Nov. 18	- Friday	Student grading of experimental theme 3.

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*Indicates periods when experimental theme writing or grading will be done.

Nov. 21	- Monday	
Nov. 23	- Wednesday	Quiz 2 and discussion: Cather, "Paul's Case," p. 681; Welty, "The Hitch-Hikers," p. 1255; Anderson, "I want to Know Why," p. 722.
Nov. 25	- Friday	Thanksgiving Recess
Nov. 28	- Monday	
Nov. 30	- Wednesday	Quiz 9 and discussion: Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter," p. 60; Bierce, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," p. 337.
Dec. 2	- Friday	
*Dec. 5	- Monday	Experimental theme 4, written in class.
Dec. 7	- Wednesday	A composition written in class. Poor or doubtful papers will be turned over to course chairman for evaluation by a departmental committee.
*Dec. 9	- Friday	Student grading of experimental theme 4.
Dec. 12	- Monday	
Dec. 14	- Wednesday	
Dec. 16	- Friday	

Dec. 19-21 - Final examination days

Materials for mastery in the Collegiate Handbook - Instructor's Assignments

1. Composition work - paragraphs and themes
   Paragraphs, Handbook, pp. 283-316.
   Composition, Handbook, pp. 249-282.
   (Auxiliary material from independent sources.)

2. Grammar and usage work
   Sentences, Handbook, pp. 3-26.
   Grammar, Handbook, pp. 54-125.
   (Auxiliary material from independent sources.)

ENGLISH 4 ASSIGNMENT SHEET - FALL QUARTER 1960

South Dakota State College

Texts: An American Rhetoric, Watt
Patterns in Writing, Doremus, Lacy and Rodman
The Odyssey, Rieu translation
A good college-level dictionary

Sept. 19-23	1.	Introduction to the course
	2.	Theme 1. Write a 500-word summary of your experience in writing. Be specific about what you have written both in and out of school.
	*3.	Patterns in Writing, p. 55, "My Life Is an Open Book." In class, Theme 2: Write a 500-word account of your reading experience, using Suggestion 3, p. 63.
Sept. 26-30	1.	Patterns in Writing, "The Feel." Write answers to questions 2 and 5.
	2.	Patterns in Writing, "Cub Pilot." Study commentary and questions. Look up definition of metaphor.
	3.	Patterns in Writing, "The Turtle" and "Father Teaches Me to Be Prompt." Look up definition of irony. Write answer to question 4, p. 47. Experimental theme 1, to be handed in Monday.
Oct. 3-7	**1.	Watt, Chapter 1. Student grading of experimental theme 1.
	2.	Watt, Chapter 2, Exercise I, parts (1), (2), (3). Keep a copy of topics.
	3.	In class, Theme 3. Develop one of the topics from Wednesday's assignment into a 500-word theme.
HOBO DAY RECESS		
Oct. 12-14	1.	Watt, Chapter 3, pp. 45-63. Write three topic sentences, each pertaining to a different aspect of the subject "My Home Town."

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*As you read the autobiographical selections, think about possible ideas for your 1500-word autobiographical paper.

**Indicates periods when experimental theme writing or grading will be done.

2. Watt, Chapter 3, pp. 63-81. Write and label 200-word paragraphs illustrating two of the methods described. You may use the topic sentences written for Monday's assignment.

Oct. 17-21

1. Watt, Chapter 3, pp. 81-89. Using one or more selections in Patterns in Writing, work Exercise II, p. 92. Identify paragraphs by title and page number.
2. Watt, Exercise VI, p. 96, paragraphs 3 and 4. Experimental theme 2, written in class.
**3. Patterns in Writing, "A Miserable, Merry Christmas." Theme 4: Follow the suggestions for writing, p. 54. Student grading of experimental theme 2.

Oct. 24-28

1. Watt, objective test over Chapters 1-3.
2. Patterns in Writing, "Surveyor in the Woods." Hand in three possible topics for your autobiographical paper. Under each, list five experiences which you might use to develop the paper.
3. Patterns in Writing, p. 631, and "Children's Page," p. 658.

Oct. 31-Nov. 4

1. Watt, Chapter 4
2. Watt, Chapter 4
3. Patterns in Writing, pp. 553-565, "Ladies' and Gentlemen's Guide to Modern English Usage" and "How to Write Like a Social Scientist." In class, Theme 5: A personal experience with grammar.

Nov. 7-9

1. 20-minute test over Chapter 4, discussion of outlining.
2. Hand in a statement of the central theme of your autobiographical paper and a tentative outline.

VETERANS DAY RECESS

Nov. 14-18

**1. Watt, Chapter 5, pp. 148-158. Experimental theme 3, to be handed in Wednesday.
2. Watt, Chapter 5, pp. 158-166. Compose the following sentences:
   5 introduced by participial phrases
   5 introduced by infinitive phrases
   5 compound-complex sentences illustrating parallel structure.

	**3.	Watt, Chapter 5, pp. 166-174. Hand in final outline for autobiographical paper. Keep a copy for yourself. Student grading of experimental theme 3.
Nov. 21-23	1.	Watt, Chapter 5, pp. 174-180.
	2.	Autobiographical paper due

THANKSGIVING RECESS

Nov. 28-Dec. 2	1.	Patterns in Writing, p. 643, "The Leader of the People"
	2.	Patterns in Writing, p. 722, "Blackberry Winter"
	3.	Test over all reading in Patterns in Writing
Dec. 5-9	**1.	The Odyssey, Books 1-3. Experimental theme 4, written in class.
	2.	The Odyssey, Books 4-7.
	**3.	The Odyssey, Books 8-11. Student grading of experimental theme 4.
Dec. 12-16	1.	The Odyssey, Books 12-15.
	2.	The Odyssey, Books 16-19. Theme 6.
	3.	The Odyssey, Books 20-24.

Dec. 19-21 FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD.